

## CHAPTER 7

# Transformational leadership and employee attitudes in a public sector context: the role of trust in management and employee core self-evaluation

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### **Contextualising Leadership as an Aspect of Ongoing Reforms in Public Administration**

The evolution of workplace dynamics requires that organisations grasp the organisational elements capable of energising and fostering positive outcomes among their members, shifting away from the conventional static hierarchy of formal roles and spans of control (Ferguson, Ronayne & Rybacki, 2014). Organisations need to envisage the characteristics that lead to efficacious management of the environment and stimulate employees to act independently and shape their environment and careers. Effective leadership is critical for organisational growth and stability (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011).

Good leadership contributes to the efficient provision of goods and services, higher levels of satisfaction among personnel, and a sense of direction and vision (Van Wart, 2003). However, leadership in the public sector faces the effects of changing contexts characterised by system flaws, stereotypes, a decline in confidence in government, and increased perceptions of inefficiency and ineffectiveness (Van Wart, 2013). These challenges do not absolve leaders in the

public sector from executing organisational goals. Therefore, different leadership styles have been employed to improve the performance of public sector organisations. In particular, transformational leadership has predominantly been utilized and explored as the optimal leadership approach, invaluable for empowering firms to achieve sustainable competitiveness, while also serving as a mechanism for fostering positive employee well-being (Ramsey et al, 2017; Arnold, 2017).

While evidence supports the existing relationship between transformational leadership and employee work attitudes, the query arises regarding the circumstances under which this interaction occurs and how organisations can leverage this relationship. This study argues that trust in management as a mediator and core self-evaluation as a moderator are of particular interest in expanding the understanding of these relationships. The study first contributes to the existing literature by utilising the Job Demands-Resource Theory to establish the relationship between transformational leadership and employee work attitudes. Secondly, the study employs the Conservation of Resource Theory to determine the mediating role of trust in management and the moderating role of core self-evaluation in the established relationships between transformational leadership and employee work attitudes.

### **Revisiting the Application of the Job Demands-Resource and Conservation of Resource Theories in the Public Sector**

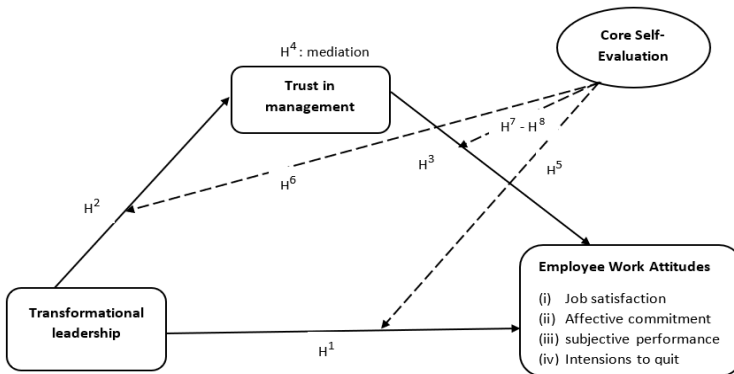
Leaders influence the working environment of their employees. According to the principles of the Job Demands-Resource Theory (JD-R), working conditions consist of two broad categories. The two categories are named as job demands and job resources distinctively related to specific work outcomes (Demerouti, et al, 2001). Independent psychological processes are developed based on the two categories that constitute job strain due to job demands or motivation processes related to job resources (Bakker & Demerouti,

2014). Job resources relate to organisational aspects of the job that are instrumental to achieving work goals, stimulating personal growth, and reducing sustained pressure from the job demands, leading to a motivational process. In this study, the prevalence of transformational leadership is considered a job resource for public sector employees. In line with the motivational process of the theory, the perceived presence of job resources will stimulate intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in employees, which in turn fosters positive work-related attitudinal outcomes.

In organisational research, boundary conditions are critical for assessing the generality of a theory across contexts by expanding the understanding of how and when the predicted relationships occur (Busse, Kach & Wagner, 2017). In line with this notion, the conservation of resource theory is adopted as the theoretical underpinning for explaining the mechanism through which the perceived prevalence of transformational leadership in organisations influences employee work attitudes. COR theory states that people are naturally inclined to obtain, retain, and protect what they value. Therefore, the things people value are referred to as “resources” (Hobfoll & Schumm, 2002). Hobfoll (1998) names the four basic categories of resources: conditions, personal characteristics, energies, and objects.

In line with the principles of COR theory, this study considers trust in management as a salient “psychological condition” mediating the relationship between transformational leadership and employee attitudinal outcomes. In relation to a positive organisational environment, the second tenet of COR theory posits that individuals invest in resources to protect, gain, or limit the loss of resources (Hobfoll & Schumm, 2009). Since trust is, a psychological condition that can develop within the workplace, the perceived presence of this psychological condition prompts the employees to want to protect or gain it. COR positions trust in management as a mediator and a condition that connects transformational leadership to employee work attitudes.

COR theory further proposes that individuals value personal resources. This study recommends core self-evaluation as a personal characteristic and a moderating variable that individuals possess at different levels. The theory holds that resources are critical determinants of an individual’s appraisal of events and predict how individuals cope with situations (Hobfoll & Schumm, 2002). When applied to this study, the first collar of COR suggests that individuals with ample resources will have more opportunities for resource gain. In contrast, those with little or lacking resources will be more vulnerable. This study proposes that core self-evaluation might play a moderating role in strengthening or weakening the influence of perceived transformational leadership in relation to employee work attitudes through trust in the manager, the mediator in the model.



**Figure 7.1:** Proposed study model

### Assessing Transformational Leadership and Attitudinal Work Outcomes

Transformational leadership is an approach wherein leaders and followers collaboratively cultivate heightened motivation, aiming to achieve organisational goals (Ghasabeh, Soosay & Reaiche, 2015). This leadership style focuses on the follower’s sense of self-worth and commitment to a shared vision as the

means to achieve organisational performance (Bass & Riggio, 2005). Transformational leadership is advocated as ideal for the effective management of global markets, including corporations and cultural or political organisations (Ghasabeh, Soosay & Reaiche, 2015).

### **The six key behaviours associated with transformational leadership**

Transformational leadership is also considered a multidimensional approach manifested by six key behaviours, namely inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualised support, high-performance expectations, idealised influence, and fostering goal acceptance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman & Fetter, 1990).

- *Inspirational motivation* refers to behaviours associated with articulating a vision and inspiring followers through the communication of high expectations (Ramsey, 2017). Through this characteristic, the leader discerns new opportunities that resonate with followers and articulates the conviction that organisational goals are achievable.
- *Intellectual stimulation* denotes a leader's behaviour that stimulates followers to think creatively. It also motivates followers to take calculated risks associated with formulating innovative strategies and applying new perspectives to problem-solving (Sharif, 2019).
- *Individualised support* is exhibited through fostering a one-to-one relationship with followers, understanding each follower's professional and personal needs, and showing respect for their feelings and opinions (Mencl, Wefald & van Ittersum, 2016). Through this behaviour, a leader promotes a conducive work environment with access to mentoring and coaching.
- *High-performance expectations* encompass providing clarity relating to the level of excellence expected in task executions and equipping the followers with the necessary knowledge and skills required to attain high performance (Khalili, 2016).

- *Idealised influence* is associated with setting good, exemplary standards for followers to imitate. This characteristic depicts a leader as a role model, displaying conviction and deep personal values that appeal to followers' emotional levels (Judge, Piccolo & Ilies, 2004).
- *Fostering goal acceptance* relates to behaviours associated with promoting cooperation and teamwork amongst the followers and encouraging healthy partnerships between co-workers and the organisation's stakeholders.

### **The four critical work attitudes that influence transformational leadership**

A typical transformational leader inspires and empowers others to perform beyond what they ordinarily thought possible. This leader takes an interest in individual needs and personal development and sets an example as a role model for excellence and high performance (Reid, 2020). Transformational leadership has been implemented in various contexts and organisational settings, demonstrating its relevance to employee attitudinal outcomes. This study considered four critical work attitudes utilised to explore the influence of transformational leadership in the public sector context, namely job satisfaction, affective commitment, subjective performance, and turnover intentions.

*Job satisfaction* broadly refers to the employees' perceptual or emotional reaction resulting from the affective evaluation of one's job (Judge et al, 2002; Ravari et al, 2012). Employees' job satisfaction is influenced by various elements, such as environmental, socio-cultural, and situational factors (Van Ham, Verhoeven, Groenier, Groothoff & De Haan 2006). One of the situational factors linked to job satisfaction is transformational leadership. Prior literature has established a positive relationship between the dimensions of transformational leadership and job satisfaction (Puni et al, 2018; Siswanto & Yuliana, 2022).

*Affective commitment* relates to the individual's emotional attachment, involvement, and identification

with the organisation. This psychological mindset compels individuals to certain actions and behaviours as an expression of the attachment they experience (Merritt, 2012). Affective commitment is one of the constructs important in defining the relationship between a person and an organisation. It is also an essential factor in explaining individual behaviour in an organisation (Juaneda-Ayensa, Clavel San Emeterio & Gonzales-Menorca, 2017). When linked to transformational leadership, empirical studies found that transformational leadership promotes and stimulates affective commitment (Ribeiro, Yücel & Gomes, 2018; Park et al, 2021).

Employee job performance is critical to attaining organisational goals. In particular, *in-role job performance* refers to employees' actions and behaviours that fulfil the requirements of the individual's job description activities necessary for effective and efficient organisational functioning (Williams & Anderson, 1991; Motowidlo, 2003). Extant literature has established the positive links between transformational leadership and employee in-role performance (Jnaneswar & Ranjit, 2020; Han & Oh, 2020). Therefore, in the presence of positive influence from the leader who influences employees to exceed their performance expectations, employees are motivated to exhibit high levels of task performance.

*Turnover intentions* are defined as employees' withdrawal inclination and attempt to leave their current workplace voluntarily (Takase, 2010; Simon, Müller & Hasselhorn, 2010). The literature outlines some pull factors drawing the employee away from the job, including factors such as being headhunted, perceived better options and a good work environment in future employment (Hom et al, 2017). Turnover intention is an important behavioural interest to many organisations since it is linked to employees' actual turnover action (Cohen, Blake & Goodman, 2016). Therefore, an organisation's ability to predict factors that contribute to employees' turnover intentions is salient because the actual turnover of critical and talented staff members is costly to companies. These costs encompass hiring new staff, training replacements, boosting

staff morale, and sustaining productivity levels, alongside maintaining organisational stability following the departure of well-trained and experienced personnel (Shaw 2011). On the basis of the job demands resource theory's motivation process, the perceived prevalence of the transformational leadership style within the organisation is envisaged to lead to lower levels of turnover intentions amongst employees. Past studies reported that higher levels of transformational leadership decreased turnover intentions (Gyensare et al, 2017).

### **The Mediating Influence of Trust in Management**

Trust relates to a discretionary relationship between two parties (Jøsang, Keser & Dimitrakos, 2005). Trust within the organisation is important for advantageous employer-employee relations that promote organisational goals. Trust in management denotes intra-organisational phenomena that relate to a psychological state prompted by the willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of the other party based on positive expectations of their conduct and behaviour (Rousseau et al, 1998; Tzafirir & Dolan, 2004). According to the theory of conservation of resources, people who have a lot of resources are more likely to take advantage of or look for chances to get more resources (Hobfoll & Schumm, 2009).

This study suggests that trust in management plays a role in the connection between transformational leadership and how employees feel about their jobs. The expected prevalence of transformational leadership within the organisation is expected to foster increased trust in management. This, in turn, correlates with improved attitudinal outcomes such as job satisfaction, performance, and affective commitment, while also reducing turnover intentions. Consequently, trust in management serves as a mediator variable, elucidating how transformational leadership shapes employee work attitudes.

Past research has reported the results of trust as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and various work outcomes. For instance, Cai, Loon & Wong (2018) found that trust in management mediated

the relations between leadership styles and acceptance of the change in organisations. The study targeted hospitality and tourism employees. Yuan et al (2021) reported trust in management as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and organisational commitment. The review of the literature shows fewer studies have tested trust as a mediator between transformational leadership and a variety of attitudinal work outcomes; hence, the current study intends to shed light on how transformational leadership influences employees' work attitudes of job satisfaction, affective commitment, in-role performance, and turnover intentions. Therefore, the study suggests that the intervention of trust in management is what ultimately promotes positive attitudes and behaviours among employees and reduces negative attitudes, which might lead to negative intentions and behaviours.

### **The Moderated Mediating Effects of Core Self-Evaluation**

Research in positive organisational scholarship has established that despite working in the same organisation and sharing the same working conditions, employees differ considerably in how they feel about their work and behave in the workplace (Mäkikangas et al, 2013). This notion has initiated investigations into the individual differences that influence employees' work attitudinal outcomes and behaviours. Core self-evaluation is a fundamental personality trait that generally reflects individuals' self-appraisal, ability to manage situations, and orientation toward the future concerning their functioning within their environment and life circumstances (Judge et al, 2003; Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge & Scott, 2009).

This second-order dispositional trait is considered a latent construct involving self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability (Gardner & Pierce, 2010). *Self-esteem* depicts an individual's appraisal of self-worth, abilities, and self-acceptance. *Generalised self-efficacy* refers

to one's ability to cope and perform in varying situations. *Locus of control* relates to an individual's belief that they can have control over events in their lives rather than attributing their behaviour's consequences to external forces. *Emotional stability* refers to one's inclination to have a strong mental capacity to feel calm and secure, especially when dealing with challenging situations (Judge et al, 2012).

Individuals with higher levels of core self-evaluation have a stable and more consistent way of dealing with reality and circumstances. They consider themselves adaptable, assertive and confident in their abilities and competencies (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011). The levels of an individual's core self-evaluation may clarify the circumstances under which transformational leadership influences employee attitudes both directly and indirectly through trust in management as a mediator. Previous research has reported the moderating role of core self-evaluation in various studies. For instance, Baral & Bhargava (2011) reported that core self-evaluation slightly moderated the relationship between predictors of work-family and enrichment. The core self-evaluation partial moderation effect was established in the relationship between authentic leadership and organisational behaviour (Joo & Jo, 2017). Therefore, regarding boundary conditions, we argue that core self-evaluation is a personal resource that strengthens the positive effect of transformational leadership on employee work attitudes.

## **Methodological Approach**

The study adopted a positivist paradigm. Using the cross-sectional time horizon, the study applied a correlational design. Correlational design refers to a type of research strategy designed to discover relationships between two or more variables (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). The data was collected from a convenience sample of 290 public service employees from Lesotho governmental ministries. The non-probability convenience sampling strategy offers advantages, given its dependence on the accessibility of chosen

organisations and the willingness of respondents to participate in the survey (Stockemer, Stockemer & Glaeser, 2019). The descriptive statistics show that the sample consisted of 160 (55.2%) female and 130 (44.8%) male respondents. In total, 48.3% of the respondents were aged between 36 and 45 years, while 27.2% were between 25 and 35 years of age. About 20% of the respondents were older than 45 years, while the rest were younger than 25 years. Prior to the commencement of data collection, the study obtained ethical clearance for the minimum risk category. The questionnaire was distributed to the participants through the human resources department as gatekeeper for the organisation. Permission to use data for research purposes was requested and obtained from the government ministries and the participants.

## Measures

The standardised measures from the literature were utilised:

- *Transformational Leadership* ( $\alpha = 0.96$ ) was evaluated using the twenty eight-item Survey of Transformational Leader Behaviour (TLB) scale developed by Podsakoff et al., (1990). Example statement: “My manager has a clear understanding of where we are going”.
- *Job Satisfaction* ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ) was evaluated using a five-item scale originally developed by Andrews and Withey (1976) and used by Rentsch and Steel (1992). Example question: “How do you feel about the work you do on your job – the work itself?”
- *Affective Commitment* ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ) was assessed using the six-item scale originally developed by Meyer et al. (1998). Example statement: “I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation”.
- *In-Role Performance* ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ) was measured by Williams and Anderson’s (1991) seven-item scale to measure subjective performance. An example item reads: “I adequately completed assigned duties.”
- *Intentions to quit* ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ) were evaluated with the four-item scale originally developed by Veldhoven and Meijman

(1994) and reported and used by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004). Example question: “I intend to change jobs in the coming year”).

- *Trust in Management* ( $\alpha = 0.58$ ) was measured by a ten-item scale originally developed by Mayer and Davis (1999) and used by Chao *et al.*, (2004). Example statement: “I am confident that top managers can make right decisions”.
- *Core self-evaluation* ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ) was measured using a twelve-item direct measure scale developed by Judge *et al.*, (2003). Example statement: “I am confident I get the success I deserve in life”.

## Data Analysis

The collected data were processed with the statistical packages for social science (SPSS) version 27 (IBM, 2022). The statistical analysis for this study included descriptive statistics, reliability and correlation statistics, and a simple mediation model analysis. Pearson’s correlation analysis was conducted to determine the type and nature of relationships between transformation, trust in the manager, and employee attitudes (affective commitment, job satisfaction, performance, and intention to quit). Effect sizes set a confidence level at 95%,  $p < 0.05$  was considered significant. Effect sizes with 0.1 indicated a small effect, 0.3 a medium effect, and 0.5 a large effect (Steyn, 2002). The minimum criterion for practical significance was a medium effect of 0.30 (Cohen, 1988). For internal consistency, the study conducted a reliability test using Cronbach’s alpha.

To assess the reliability of the instrument, higher coefficients indicate better reliability (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017) was utilised for simple mediation modelling with the Jamovi open-access software (Version 2.2.5.0). Mediation was established with the indirect effect using a percentile bootstrap estimation approach with 5 000 samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The bootstrap analysis found an indirect effect to be significant if both the lower-level confidence interval (LLCI) and the upper-level

confidence interval (ULCI) did not include zero (Zhao, Lynch & Chen, 2010). A complimentary mediation result could only be determined when the mediated and direct effects existed, pointing in the same direction (Zhao et al., 2010).

## Main Findings from the Empirical Data

### Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics and the reliabilities of all the scales used in the study are presented in Table 7.1 below.

**Table 7.1:** Descriptive statistics

	Alpha	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
1. Transform- ational leadership	0.96	4.09	1.41	0.18	0.72
2. Vision articulation	0.93	4.26	1.70	-0.14	-1.01
3. Role modelling	0.94	4.09	1.91	-0.15	-1.15
4. Goal acceptance	0.96	4.21	1.83	-0.10	-1.01
5. Performance expectations	0.85	4.30	1.58	-0.20	-0.68
6. Individual consideration	0.62	3.87	1.14	0.02	0.96
7. Intellectual stimulation	0.92	3.83	1.64	-0.04	-0.93
8. Core self evaluation	0.90	3.01	0.88	-0.25	-0.25
9. Trust in the manager	0.58	4.00	0.75	0.69	0.46
10. Organisation commitment	0.88	3.36	0.90	-0.46	0.00

	Alpha	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
11. Job satisfaction	0.71	3.31	0.68	-0.34	-0.02
12. Performance	0.80	3.99	0.56	-0.87	2.66
13. Intentions to quit	0.94	3.51	1.17	-0.40	-0.72

Inspection of Table 7.1 indicated that all scales were reliable and internally consistent because they yielded Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) values because the scales used in the study exceeded the required .70 cut-off value. Table 7.1 also suggests that all the variables used in this study were scored above the midpoint of the scale, suggesting agreement with or experiencing the construct. Table 7.3 also indicates that the data for all scales used were normally distributed given the guidelines of 2.00 for skewness (Finch, West & MacKinnon, 1997).) and 4.00 for kurtosis (Wright & Herrington 2011).

### Correlational analysis

This study was also interested in determining the relationships between the variables used in this study (transformational leadership, trust in the manager, core self-evaluation, affective organisational commitment, job satisfaction, subjective performance and intentions to quit). The results of this analysis are presented in Table 7.2.

Inspection of Table 7.2 suggests that all sub-scales of transformational leadership were closely related to one another with large effect ( $r = 0.90$ ). The aggregated transformational leadership demonstrated a noticeable positive medium effect with work attitudes including trust in management ( $r = 0.47$ ), affective commitment ( $r = 0.46$ ) and inverse negative medium effect with turnover intentions ( $r = -0.35$ ) which indicated that employees who perceive high prevalence of transformational leadership would likely be associated with lower levels of turnover intentions. The analysis also shows that trust in management depicts positive medium effect correlation. For example, the employee work

**Table 7.2:** Correlation analysis

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Transformational	—											
2. Vision Articulation	0.90	—										
3. Role modelling	0.90	0.83	—									
4. Goal acceptance	0.92	0.82	0.85	—								
5. Perf. Expectations	0.85	0.67	0.68	0.71	—							
6. Ind. Consideration	0.68	0.51	0.48	0.52	0.59	—						
7. Intel. Stimulation	0.86	0.73	0.69	0.74	0.71	0.56	—					
8. Trust: managers	0.47	0.48	0.44	0.45	0.35	0.27	0.40	—				
9. CSE	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.09	—			
10. Commitment	0.46	0.49	0.42	0.45	0.33	0.20	0.42	0.47	0.12	—		
11. Job satisfaction	0.46	0.45	0.40	0.42	0.38	0.23	0.43	0.42	0.08	0.64	—	
12. Performance	-0.05	-0.03	-0.08	-0.07	0.02	-0.05	-0.02	-0.10	0.24	-0.05	0.14	—
13. Intentions to quit	-0.35	-0.39	-0.34	-0.35	-0.26	-0.06	-0.34	-0.31	-0.02	-0.59	-0.47	0.09

\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level. / \* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level. Results were interpreted as: 0.01= small effect, 0.3 = medium effect, 0.5 = large effect (Steyn, 1999).

attitude including effective commitment ( $r = 0.47$ ), and job satisfaction ( $r = 0.42$ ). Trust had an inverse relationship with turnover intentions demonstrating the negative effect ( $r = -0.31$ ).

### **Testing the mediation models**

The hypothesised models predominantly consist of mediation models wherein the prevalence of transformational leadership within an organisation influences perceptions of trust in the manager, subsequently impacting various employee work attitudes, including organisational commitment, job satisfaction, subjective performance experiences, and intentions to quit. Although we started with this more parsimonious model, there are no theoretical reasons to exclude partial mediation. We performed a closer examination of the direct and indirect effects as well as confidence intervals to evaluate their relative sizes. We computed the significance of mediation effects by using the bootstrap procedure (95% normal Confidence Interval (CI) using 1000 samples) as implemented in the Jamovi free access software (version). The results of the mediation analysis can be found in Table 3.

A closer inspection of Table 7.3 revealed that there was a *full mediation* in one of the models with organisational commitment DV with the *near statistically significant indirect effects (.09)*, even though the confidence intervals did not include zero. However, the mediating effects of trust in the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction, subjective experience of performance, and intentions to quit could not be confirmed in this study. Full mediation, in this case, implies that the mediator (trust in the manager) fully explains the association between transformational leadership and intentions to quit.

### **Testing the moderated mediations (conditional process) models**

This study also aimed at determining the conditional process where core self-evaluation could serve as a moderator in any



of the three paths (a, b, and c') in any of the mediation models tested above. In these models, transformational leadership served as a predictor of employee attitudes (organisation commitment, job satisfaction, subjective experience of performance, and intentions to quit) through a mediatory core self-evaluation. The mediating model with job satisfaction, subjective experience of performance, and intentions to quit were excluded from any other analysis because the mediating role of core self-evaluation could not be confirmed in this mediation analysis.

In conditional process analysis using the Jamovi software, the first analysis was focused on whether the moderator actually has a moderating effect on the components of the mediated effects. In order to do this, the moderation effects (interactions) were explored. A closer examination of the direct and indirect effects as well as confidence intervals to evaluate their relative sizes were examined. The significance of mediation effects by using the bootstrap procedure [95% normal Confidence Interval (CI) using 1000 samples] as implemented in the Jamovi free access software (version) were computed. The results of the moderated mediation analysis indicated organisational commitment. The focus was first on the moderated mediation model with organisational commitment as the dependent variable under different conditions of CSE (Mean - 1 SD, mean, and Mean + 1 SD) to determine when moderated mediation effects could be expected. The results of this analysis can be found in Table 4:

A closer inspection of Table 7.4 suggests that the indirect effects of the low levels of the CSE group [IE=0.0384, CI=(0.00828, 0.0684), beta=0.0616, z=2.50, p=0.012] yielded a significant effect, and the confidence intervals did not include zero. This means that the conditional mediation effects are due to the fact that when trust influences commitment; its effects do depend on low CSE. Table 7.4 also suggests that the indirect effects of the medium levels of the CSE group [IE=0.0831, CI=(0.04666, 0.1196), beta=0.1317, z=4.47, p<0.001] yielded a significant effect, and the confidence intervals did not include zero with a larger effect (compared to the previous condition).

Table 7.4: Conditional Process with Commitment as DV

Moderator levels		95% C.I. (a)							
CSE	Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	$\beta$	z	p
Mean -1SD	Indirect	Trans $\Rightarrow$ Trust $\Rightarrow$ Commitment	0.0384	0.0153	0.00828	0.0684	0.0616	2.50	0.012
Mean -1SD	Component	Trans $\Rightarrow$ Trust	0.2371	0.0473	0.14437	0.3298	0.3784	5.01	<.001
Mean -1SD		Trust $\Rightarrow$ Commitment	0.1618	0.0561	0.05181	0.2718	0.1627	2.88	0.004
Mean -1SD	Direct	Trans $\Rightarrow$ Commitment	0.1965	0.0471	0.10411	0.2888	0.3154	4.17	<.001
Mean -1SD	Total	Trans $\Rightarrow$ Commitment	0.2357	0.0483	0.14106	0.3304	0.3712	4.88	<.001
Mean	Indirect	Trans $\Rightarrow$ Trust $\Rightarrow$ Commitment	0.0831	0.0186	0.04666	0.1196	0.1317	4.47	<.001
Mean	Component	Trans $\Rightarrow$ Trust	0.2839	0.0328	0.21957	0.3482	0.4532	8.65	<.001

Moderator levels		95% C.I. (a)								
CSE	Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	$\beta$	z	p	
Mean		Trust $\Rightarrow$ Commitment	0.2928	0.0561	0.18281	0.4028	0.2905	5.22	< .001	
Mean	Direct	Trans $\Rightarrow$ Commitment	0.1894	0.0353	0.12027	0.2585	0.3000	5.37	< .001	
Mean	Total	Trans $\Rightarrow$ Commitment	0.2795	0.0335	0.21375	0.3452	0.4400	8.34	< .001	
Mean+1-SD	Indirect	Trans $\Rightarrow$ Trust $\Rightarrow$ Commitment	0.1402	0.0248	0.09157	0.1888	0.2138	5.65	< .001	
Mean+1-SD	Component	Trans $\Rightarrow$ Trust	0.3307	0.0388	0.25470	0.4067	0.5279	8.53	< .001	
Mean+1-SD		Trust $\Rightarrow$ Commitment	0.4238	0.0561	0.31381	0.5338	0.4050	7.55	< .001	
Mean+1-SD	Direct	Trans $\Rightarrow$ Commitment	0.1823	0.0415	0.10107	0.2636	0.2781	4.40	< .001	
Mean+1-SD	Total	Trans $\Rightarrow$ Commitment	0.3232	0.0396	0.24552	0.4008	0.5088	8.16	< .001	

Note: Confidence intervals computed with method: Bootstrap (normal) / Note. Betas are completely standardised effect sizes.

This means that the conditional mediation effects are due to the fact that when trust influences commitment; its effects do depend on medium CSE. In addition, it was noted that the indirect effects of the high levels of the CSE group [IE=0.1402, CI= (0.09157, 0.1888), beta=0.2138, z=5.65, p<0.001] yielded a significant effect, and the confidence intervals did not include zero with a larger effect (compared to the previous condition). This means that the conditional mediation effects are due to the fact that when trust influences commitment; its effects depend on levels of CSE. Thus, for low, medium, and high CSE; levels of CSE have a strong influence on commitment, and this effect is partially due to the mediating effects of trust.

### **Insights and Highlights of the Findings**

The first objective was to determine the direct effects between transformational leadership and employee work attitudes encompassing job satisfaction, affective commitment, in-role job performance, and turnover intentions. The results of the correlation analysis indicate that the perceived prevalence of transformational leadership fosters positive work attitudes such as job satisfaction and affective commitment, while also reducing employee turnover intentions. The results also confirmed a positive relationship between transformational leadership and trust in management.

The disparities in certain associations indicate that employees differ in their perception of observed levels of transformational leadership and the actual influence they feel, shaping their attitudes. Prior research has similarly substantiated these findings, demonstrating direct effects, such as a positive relationship with job satisfaction (Puni, Mohammed & Asamoah, 2018). Other studies have established a positive association with affective commitment (Park et al, 2021). In the current study, association with in-role performance did not yield significant results. Similar findings were reported by Indrayanto, Burgess & Dayaram (2014). Our finding differed from other studies; for example Bartram & Casimir (2007) reported significant positive association with

in-role performance. The negative association with turnover intentions was supported (Gyensare et al, 2017).

The second objective investigated the mediating role of trust in management in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee work attitudes. The results of the mediation analysis suggest the existence of one full mediation model, with affective organisational commitment as a dependent variable while the mediation role of trust in the leader as an independent variable could not be confirmed in the relations between transformational leadership and job satisfaction, subjective experience of performance, and intentions to quit.

In this context, full mediations imply that two employees who deviate by one standard deviation in their levels of transformational leadership are projected to deviate by 0.176 standard deviations in their organisational commitment, indicating that individuals with stronger transformational leadership tend to report higher levels of organisational commitment. The individual with an additional standard deviation in transformational leadership is anticipated to exhibit a 0.063 standard deviation increase in organisational commitment, owing to the constructive impact of transformational leadership on trust in the leader, consequently fostering higher levels of organisational commitment. Holding constant trust in the leader, an employee with one standard deviation higher in transformational leadership is estimated to be 0.010 standard deviations higher in organisational commitment. This study could not confirm the mediating role of trust in the leader in the relationship between transformational leadership and in-role performance.

Employees who perceive the prevalence of transformational leadership as a job resource at their disposition, will trust their managers more. In turn, they will be more committed, satisfied with their jobs, and less inclined to think about quitting their jobs. Independent of this process, considering the direct effects, employees who

believe they are exposed to transformational leadership as a resource availability will also be more committed to their jobs. The support for trust in management as a mediator between transformational leadership and various work attitudes was established in the empirical literature. For example, a study among civil servants in Hong Kong, depicted trust in management as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and acceptance of change (Cai, Loon & Wong, 2018). Trust also reported a partial mediation between transformational leadership and organisational identification, as well as continuous improvement efforts (Khattak, Zolin & Muhammad, 2020). In addition, the mediation role of trust in management was also reported in the relationship between transformational leadership and organisational commitment (Yuan et al, 2021).

This study also aimed at determining the conditional process where core self-evaluation could serve as a moderator in any of the three paths (a, b, and c), in any of the mediation models tested above. In these models, transformational leadership served as a predictor of employee attitudes (organisation commitment) through a mediator, namely, trust in the manager. The mediating model that used job satisfaction, subjective experience of performance, and intentions to quit as dependent variables (DV), was not used in any other analysis because trust in the manager could not be proven to play a role in this mediation analysis. The results of the moderated mediation analysis suggested that CSE does seem to moderate the path from trust to commitment because of a near significant marginal value ( $p=0.096$ ), even though the confidence interval included zero.

This means that the conditional mediation is perhaps due to the fact that when trust influences commitment; its effects depend on CSE levels (conditions). This model is sometimes called moderated mediation because the interaction follows the mediator in the mediation pathway. It was observed that the indirect effects of the low, medium, and high levels of the SCE group did yield a significant effect, and the confidence intervals did not include zero for all three conditions of CSE

(mean, +1 SD and -1 SD). This means that the conditional mediation effects are due to the fact that when trust influences commitment; its effects depend on levels of CSE. Thus, for medium and high CSE, transformational leadership has an effect on commitment. This effect is partially due to the mediating effects of trust in the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment.

### **Practical Applications to the Public Sector Organisations**

Pertaining to managerial and practical implications, the study findings reveal that organisations should strive to provide a work environment that promotes transformational leadership behaviours. The findings from the mediation path show that when employees perceive high levels of transformational leadership within the organisation, it increases their levels of trust in management and enhances positive work attitudes while diminishing negative attitudes. Public sector organisations, in particular, should provide training support for the leaders that can stimulate their cognitive realisation of the behaviours needed to portray transformational leadership in organisations. Organisations should also include metrics for transformational leadership when designing performance evaluations to encourage the continuous development of this attribute. The study also identified trust in management as a condition-oriented resource that facilitates the interaction between transformational leadership and some work attitudes. Therefore, to further advance the atmosphere and culture of trust in organisations, managers should lead by example and engage in behaviours that promote trust relationships.

The study additionally delineated that moderate and high levels of core self-evaluation moderate interactions, resulting in stronger associations for employees exhibiting this personality trait. For managers, these findings position individual differences and personality characteristics as enablers for transformational leadership to influence employee attitudes. Based on these findings, recruitment and

selection strategies can be tailored to prioritise employees with the required levels of core self-evaluation to join the organisation. Organisations can further conduct periodic evaluations of existing employees' levels of core self-evaluation. They can then offer training and coaching aimed at continuously developing and nurturing this valuable personal resource.

The study context also contributes to the significance of this study. The conceptual model was tested in Lesotho, a developing African country. The results of the existing empirical studies mainly emerged from Western and Asian countries. Therefore, establishing findings from an African country enriches the generalisability of the constructs determining the interactions between organisational factors and employee behaviours within the public sector work context.

### **Lessons and Recommendations for Future Improvements**

The study incurred a few limitations despite the manifested key contributions and recommendations. Firstly, the time horizon of the study was cross-sectional, which only permits the simultaneous measurement of variables at one stage. Future studies can employ a longitudinal time horizon to determine the causal relationships and various points in time. Methodologically, the study adopted a quantitative approach. The approach prevents the exploration of rich, in-depth narratives and expressions that can be obtained through a qualitative approach.

Future studies can employ a combination of both approaches for more comprehensive findings. The current research has also investigated the phenomenon at an individual level of analysis, and other studies can consider the investigation at the team and organisational level. Data was collected from the self-report questionnaires, which can lead to common source bias. Future studies can address this limitation by incorporating other data sources such as

company records and observations. Although the study's recommendations would be more applicable to the contextual setting of the study (Lesotho public sector), the model of the study can be tested in other cultural and contextual settings, especially in other developing African countries.

## **Conclusion**

This study has developed and proposed a model that would serve as a guide for public sector organisations in identifying the organisational factors or job resources and individual employee differences that are critical for nurturing desirable employee work attitudes, which in turn have the potential to influence employees' behaviours and actions in the workplace. The need to contribute to ongoing reforms to professionalise the public sector and establish the factors that can stimulate positive attitudes and behaviours among public sector employees has motivated the investigation in this study. Organisational research continues to find a better understanding of why employees conduct themselves differently while working within the same environment and working conditions.

The key finding of this study revealed that within the tested model, the medium- and high -level groups of employees with CSE yielded a significant effect. This implies that the conditional moderated mediation effects are due to the fact that when trust influences work attitudes and specifically affective commitment, its effects depend on levels of CSE. These results contribute to the existing research exploring organisational factors and boundary conditions influencing employee work attitudes. The results also provide insights for decision-making processes and strategies aimed at enhancing the optimal utilisation of human capital in public sector organisations.

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